

# division of public housing & rental assistance



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## Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) *Fact Sheet*

The Department of Housing and Community Development's fiscal year 2005 budget included a new \$2 million account to create a one-year pilot program that would provide financial assistance to homeless families and families at risk of becoming homeless. The Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) Program provides short term, limited financial assistance which will enable families to retain housing, obtain new housing or otherwise avoid homelessness.

DHCD's Division of Public Housing and Rental Assistance, which administers this program, has responsibility for regulatory and administrative oversight of all state-aided public housing and rental assistance programs which address the needs of low-income families, elders and persons with disabilities.

### **How it works**

DHCD contracts with nine (9) Regional Non Profit housing agencies (RNPs) to administer the program on the local level.

DHCD has established a maximum benefit of \$1,500 per family. On a case-by-case basis, a RNP may seek DHCD approval to provide financial assistance greater than \$1,500 per family but not to exceed \$3,000.

Program funds must be expended for housing related expenses only. Families in need of supportive services should be referred to appropriate service provider agencies. Eligible use of funds include: security deposits, first/last months rent, moving expenses, utility payments, rent arrearages, transportation related expenses if necessary for employment, and other housing related expenses deemed necessary by the RNP to ensure that families moving from a shelter environment are able to obtain to their own apartment (furnishings, e.g., crib, refrigerator).

(continued)

**Who is eligible**

Homeless families that lack a permanent primary residence and families at-risk of becoming homeless because they cannot afford housing costs without financial assistance are eligible for the program. A family is defined as two or more people living together, one of which must be a dependent child under the age of 21 or a household member with a disability.

Program participants must have incomes at or below 130% of the federal poverty level as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Generally, a program participant cannot pay more than 50% of the household's income for housing. However, prior to determining an applicant ineligible, the RNP must give an applicant a fair opportunity to establish that RAFT assistance will enable the applicant household to retain its housing, obtain new housing, or otherwise avoid homelessness even if the applicant would be paying more than 50% of the household's income for rent.

**Application process**

Interested applicants must apply for assistance at one of the Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) operated by the nine (9) RNPs. The HCECs serve as one stop referral centers for housing consumers, service providers and property owners. A list of the HCECs is available on line at [www.masshousinginfo.org](http://www.masshousinginfo.org).

Persons interested in applying for the RAFT program can also call 1-800-224-5124 to find out which HCEC serves their region.

Applications for assistance will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

**For further information**

Please contact the Bureau of Housing Management at (617) 573-1150.